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*All
a Mistake*

by

W.C. Parker

*T.S. Denison & Company
Publishers · Chicago
Price 35 cents*



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T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
623 South Wabash Ave.

Publishers
CHICAGO

ALL A MISTAKE

A Farce Comedy in Three Acts

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BY
W. C. PARKER

AUTHOR OF

*"Those Dreadful Twins," "A Black Heifer," "The
Lonelyville Social Club," "Brother Josiah," "The
Face at the Window," etc.*



CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

ALL A MISTAKE.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

<i>unlike</i>	CAPT. OBADIAH SKINNER.....	<i>A Retired Sea Captain</i>
<i>Thimble</i>	LIEUT. GEORGE RICHMOND.....	<i>His Nephew</i>
<i>Smith</i>	RICHARD HAMILTON.....	<i>A Country Gentleman</i>
<i>Pinkie</i>	FERDINAND LIGHTHEAD.....	<i>A Neighbor</i>
<i>Union</i>	NELLIE RICHMOND.....	<i>George's Wife</i>
<i>St. John</i>	NELLIE HUNTINGTON.....	<i>A Friend</i>
<i>Charlotte</i>	CORNELIA (NELLIE) SKINNER.....	<i>Obadiah's Sister</i>
	NELLIE MCINTYRE.....	<i>A Servant</i>

TIME—*The Present.*

PLACE—*House and Grounds of Capt. Obadiah Skinner, Otherwise Known as "Oak Farm," Westchester, and Adjoining the State Insane Asylum.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Two Hours.*

NOTICE.—Amateurs are free to produce this play, but the sole professional rights are reserved by the author, who may be addressed in care of the Publisher.

MADE IN U. S. A.

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COSTUMES.

CAPT.—Canvas hunting coat, corduroy breeches, canvas leggings, negligée shirt, large handkerchief around his neck, cap and boots. Same throughout.

GEORGE—Lieutenant's fatigue uniform throughout. Military cap in first act, until exit with Nellie Huntington.

RICHARD HAMILTON, *Acts I. and II.*—Business suit. *Act III.*—Trousers torn up the legs, seat gone; coat with one sleeve gone, the balance in rags; nothing remaining of his hat but the brim, which is pressed down over his ears; collar nearly torn off; necktie turned around and hanging down his back.

FERDY, *Act I.*—Golf suit until first exit, then change to full evening dress, which is worn through balance of play.

NELL RICH., *Act I.*—Traveling dress. *Acts II and III.*—House gown.

NELL HUNT., *Act I.*—Morning gown. *Acts II and III.*—House gown.

CORNELIA.—Eccentric and old-fashioned garment (a different one may be used in each act.) Always carries a black workbag suspended from her wrist.

NELL.—Suitable servant's dress throughout.

PROPERTIES.

ACT I.—Traveling bags, umbrellas, hat boxes, etc., for GEO. and NELL R. Letters for GEO. Wedding ring for NELL R. Workbag, letters and powder rag for COR. Cane, letter, wheelbarrow and roses for FERDY.

ACT II.—Letters for COR. and NELL. Gun for CAPT. Blank cartridges for gun. Burnt cork for NELL. Hot air radiator, tar bucket, brush and money for GEO. Red fire for finish.

ACT III.—Towel and knife for CAPT. Revolver for RICH. Dustpan, wreath of flowers, apron and veil for NELL H. Letter for GEO.

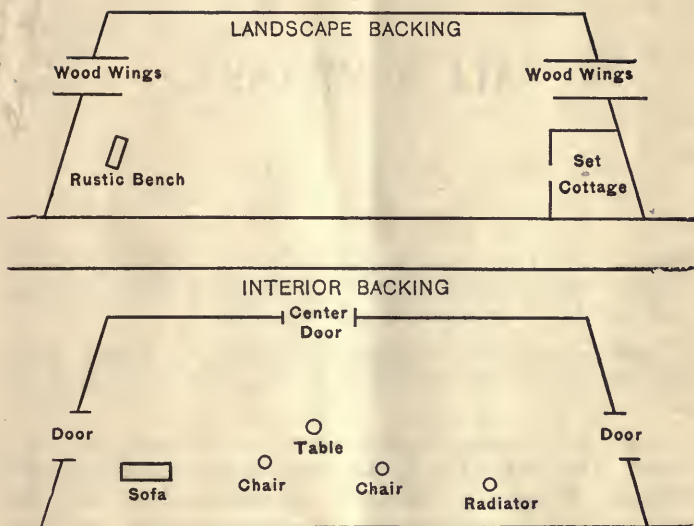
SYNOPSIS FOR PROGRAM.

ACT I.—The arrival of George and his bride. The dilemma. A friend in need. The plot against the Captain and its disastrous effect. The old maid and her secret. Ferdy in search of a wife. George's jealousy. The sudden appearance of a most undesirable party. George's quick wit prevents discovery.

ACT II.—The plot thickens. Cornelia in search of her "Romeo." Nell gets a letter, which adds to the mystery. The downfall of Ferdy. Richard attempts to try the "soothing system" on a lunatic. George has a scheme connected with a fire in the furnace and some pitch tar. Richard runs amuck amid general confusion.

ACT III.—The Captain arms himself with a butcher knife and plans revenge. Richard attempts to escape. Nellie hopelessly insane. The comedy duel. "Romeo" at last. "Only *one* Nellie in the world." The unraveling of a skein of mystery, and the finish of an exciting day, to find it was "All A Mistake."

SCENE PLOT.



NOTE.—While a set cottage will, of course, add to the effect of Act I, yet it is not absolutely necessary, and in case one is not used all entrances and exits marked “door of house” should be made “*L. 2, E.*”

ACT I.—Front lawn at “Oak Farm.”

ACT II.—Drawing room at “Oak Farm.”

ACT III.—Same as Act II.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of the stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *1 E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance, etc.; *D. F.*, door in flat or back of the stage. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

ALL A MISTAKE.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*The front lawn at "Oak Farm." Landscape backing. Set cottage L. Rustic bench R. 2. Wood wings R. and L. Lively music till curtain up.*

Enter GEORGE and NELLIE RICHMOND C., loaded down with traveling bags, dress-suit cases, hat boxes, umbrellas, etc.

GEO. (*Throwing his load down in a heap up L.*) Well! This is the last time I want to go traveling with a woman! Why, it's worse than breaking stone for the State!

NELL RICHMOND (*Setting her traps down R.*). That's right—lay all the blame on the woman—just like a man!

GEO. Huh! That's what you say (*sighing*). Well, the fatal moment has arrived!

NELL R. And thank goodness!

GEO. Do you mean to say you are glad my uncle is dying?

NELL R. What a question! You must think I'm fond of death-beds, funerals, and that sort of thing!

GEO. I only took you at your word.

NELL R. You know I was only glad we had arrived at our destination. I declare, I'm so tired, I couldn't walk another step.

GEO. I wonder why there is nobody around?

NELL R. Perhaps they are all engaged in dressing the body for burial.

GEO. It's an awful feeling to come to visit a dead man!

NELL R. I'm sure it would be utterly impossible to gossip with a corpse! (*Sighs.*)

GEO. I really hesitate to ring the bell. It seems just like waking up the dead.

NELL R. Oh, if you could only bring him back to life again.

GEO. And confess that I have disobeyed him and married you?

NELL R. (*Sniffing*). I really believe you're sorry!

GEO. Of course I am.

NELL R. Then why did you marry me at all? I think you're just horrid!

GEO. I mean, sorry my uncle is dead, you goose.

NELL R. Oh, that's different!

GEO. It's strange there's no crepe on the door. I wonder if Nellie Huntington received my telegram? If she "stands me up," I'll—

NELL R. (*Looking off C.*). There she is now.

GEO. Good! I tell you what, she's the right kind of a girl, all right, all right!

NELL R. (*Pouting*). Well, if you think so much of her, it's too bad you didn't marry her instead of me!

GEO. That's so. It's funny I never thought of that. *Enter NELLIE HUNTINGTON C. from L. Lively music.*

NELL HUNTINGTON (*Kisses NELL R. Takes both by the hands*). Well, how are you?

GEO. Oh, we're quite well, thank you, but actually dying from excitement.

NELL H. Excitement? I do not understand.

GEO. (*Producing letter*). This letter will explain.

NELL H. One moment. Our remaining outside is liable to cause some comment. Shall we not go in the house?

NELL R. I am actually dying from fatigue.

GEO. But—

NELL R. George is really afraid to ring.

GEO. I hesitate to disturb his last moments.

NELL H. (*Smiling*). I can imagine your uncanny feeling. Permit me. (*Goes toward house.*)

NELL (*and others, outside L., sing the chorus of some*

popular comic song. NELL H., NELL R. AND GEO. *appear shocked.*)

GEO. Do my ears deceive me?

NELL H. The servants are evidently carousing.

GEO. Singing comic songs!

NELL R. Your uncle is undoubtedly dead and they are preparing to leave.

NELL H. Your uncle dead?

GEO. Yes. This letter summoned me to his bedside, to attend him in his last illness.

NELL H. I am awfully sorry.

GEO. (*Calling off L.*)? Is that you, Nell?

NRR & NHN Enter NELL, door of house.

NELL. Oh-ho-ho—look at that now! (*Aside.*) It's Masther George! Sure, he's caught us all singin'! (*To GEO.*) What are ye all standin' there fer? Why don't yez come in?

GEO. Tell me—Uncle Obadiah—has he gone?

NELL. Sure, he's gone. You know his fondness fer huntin'.

GEO. Alas! He's gone to his final hunting grounds! (*CAPT. fires gun outside, R.*) What's that—poachers? Have they no respect for the dead?

NELL. Sure, that's the masther.

ALL. Who?

NELL (*To GEO.*). Your uncle, sir. He's gone huntin' in the woods beyant. Faith, I'll go an' tell him ye've arrived. (*Exit hastily C. to R.*)

GEO. Hold on! Don't call him! (*Runs after NELL.*) Too late—she's gone. (*Coming down C.*) Well, what do you think of that?

NELL H. It's certainly very strange.

GEO. Strange is no name for it! (*Pointing off R. C.*) Do you see that building next door?

NELL H. Yes, it's the State Insane Asylum.

GEO. (*Excitedly.*) Well, uncle hasn't lived alongside of it twenty years for nothing! He's been near 'em so long, that he's gone daffy himself! (*Nervously walking about.*)

That's what's the matter with him—he's crazy as a bed bug!

NELL H. You are not sorry—

GEO. To find him alive? On the contrary, I hope he'll live forever—but that doesn't alter the fact that I'm in a lovely scrape—and worse still, I can't see any way out of it!

NELL H. But you have not explained the nature of the difficulty—

NELL R. It's no use! We're caught! Oh, why did we come here?

GEO. (To NELL H.) In his letter my uncle has sworn to disinherit me unless I succeed in securing you as my wife.

NELL H. Indeed?

GEO. Talk about being "up against it"—don't you think that I'm "it" with a big I?

NELL H. It was foolish of you to bring your wife here with you.

GEO. Of course it was, but she wouldn't stay at home.

NELL R. Well, I should say not!

NELL H. What are you going to do?

GEO. Do? Why, I'll get out of here as fast as my legs will carry me!

NELL H. What! You, a lieutenant in the 71st infantry, the crack regiment of the country, run away?

GEO. Well, you see—

NELL H. You, who fought your way up the hill at El Caney, and won promotion for excessive gallantry, now afraid to meet your own uncle?

GEO. But this is different.

NELL H. Can you care less for your wife's future happiness than for the country for which you fought so nobly?

GEO. I'll telegraph uncle that I've been suddenly taken ill!

NELL H. You forget that he already must know of your arrival.

GEO. That confounded servant!

NELL H. Well, I am here, and will do all in my power to assist you.

GEO. You will?

NR^{es} > NH
ALL A MISTAKE.

NELL R. How good of you!

GEO. (*To Nell. H.*) I'll tell uncle that I've married you, and that Nellie here is merely a friend of yours, come along to keep you company.

NELL R. Oh, pshaw, why don't you tell the truth about it?

GEO. And be disinherited for my disobedience? No, I say!

NELL R. (*Pouting*). Well, you can't be her husband and mine, too.

GEO. The first thing I know I'll be arrested for bigamy! (*Looking off R. C.*). Here he comes now.

NELL H. Now, don't get confused. Remember your parts!

GEO. I'm so rattled I couldn't remember the alphabet! (*NELL H. down L., NELL R. down R. and GEO. R. C.*)

Ca 4 NH Enter CAPT. C. from R. Lively music.

CAPTAIN (*Tipping cap*). Ladies, you honor me. (*Shakes hands with GEO.*) George, I have heard of your bravery at Santiago, and must say that I am very proud of you.

GEO. I merely did my duty——

CAPT. Tut, tut. We know that, my boy, and you don't realize how it pleases me to know that you have at last respected my wishes sufficiently to wed the girl I selected for you so long ago. (*To NELL H.*). Nellie, my heart was set upon this match, and I am happy to be able to receive you as a member of our family. (*Kisses NELL H.*).

NELL H. (*Introducing NELL R.*). Captain, let me present you to my friend, Miss Nellie Blanchard.

CAPT. Delighted to know you, Miss Blanchard, and permit me to add that any friend of Mrs. Richmond (*indicating NELL H., which causes NELL R. to wince*) is doubly welcome.

NR Ca NH 4 Enter COR., C. from R.

CORNELIA. Good morning, folks.

CAPT. Sister, I'm glad to see you. (*Shakes hands with and kisses her.*)

GEO. Why, it's Aunt Cornelia.

CAPT. (*To COR.*). Here's our nephew, George. He's survived the ordeal of an army campaign, got married, and fetched his wife here to spend the honeymoon.

COR. How romantic! (*To GEO.*) I'm right glad to see you. You're looking well. (*They shake hands.*)

GEO. And you look as fresh as a daisy.

COR. Now, George, you know I always disliked daisies. (*Starts to kiss GEO. He does not reciprocate.* COR., surprised, notices NELL R. anxiously watching GEO.) And so this is the bride? (*Starts toward NELL R.*)

GEO. (*Forgetting*). Yes, she is my— (*corrects himself*) that is—Miss Nellie Blanchard, a friend of ours.

COR. Happy to know you, Miss Blanchard. (*Tries to kiss her.*)

NELL R. (*Kisses COR. on the cheek*).

COR. (*Goes to NELL H.*) And this must be the happy one. As I live, it's Jerry Huntington's daughter! Why, do you know, I came very near being your mother?

ALL. Her mother?

NELL H. I was not aware that my father intended to commit bigamy.

COR. Ah, you misunderstand me. He courted me before he met your mother.

ALL. Oh!

COR. When I jilted him, he vowed he'd marry the first woman that'd have him, and I suppose he did.

NELL H. (*Aside*). She's very complimentary.

GEO. (*Aside*). This old hen is liable to spoil everything.

COR. But that ain't nothin' against you, my dear, for you're looking as blushin' as a rosebud, and I'm glad you married George, for I'm sure nobody else could ever hold him in when he gets to goin' it wild. (*Tries to kiss NELL H., who kisses her on the cheek.*)

NELL R. (*Aside*). Going it wild, eh? I'll ask George for an explanation. (*Goes to GEO., gesticulating.* GEO. appears to pacify her. NELL H. goes C. and converses with the CAPT.)

COR. (*Goes down, L. Aside*). I don't like it one bit

the way those city girls have of kissing a person on the cheek. Mercy me! If there had been many more of them, they'd have kissed off all that "French rougey." (*Rouge.*) Fortunately, I have plenty with me. (*Turns her back to the others, takes powder rag from the workbag and slyly touches up her cheeks with rouge.*)

GEO. (*Aside to NELL R.*). It's all right, I tell you. (*She pouts and looks at COR. GEO. pats her on the back.*)

COR. (*Aside*). George seems to be more attentive to Miss Blanchard than he is to his wife. I'm afeared they didn't marry fer love.

NELL H. (*To CAPT.*). Ah, Captain, married life is what we make it.

COR. (*Aside*). I do hope I've put that "rougey" on all right. (*To NELL H.*) Ah—Mrs. Richmond—(*NELL R. starts*). May I speak a word with you?

NELL H. (*Surprised*). With me? Certainly. Excuse me, Captain. (*Goes to COR.*)

CAPT. Certainly, my dear. (*Aside.*) She's a ship-shape gal, all right, but from what she's been telling me, I'll bet she'll make George "toe the scratch."

COR. (*Aside to NELL H.*). My dear, do you notice anything unusual about my looks?

NELL H. Well, no, unless it is that you are looking exceedingly well and have such lovely rosy cheeks.

COR. (*Aside*). She's noticed the "rougey!" (*To NELL H.*) They ain't too red, are they? Don't look as if I was getting consumption?

NELL H. Mercy, no! You look the perfect picture of health. (*Goes up C., laughing.*)

COR. (*Aside*). I breathe again.

CAPT. But what am I thinking of, to keep you all standing out of doors? You must be all tired out after your journey. (*Takes NELL H.'s right hand with his left.*) George, your hand. (*Takes GEORGE'S left hand with his right.*) Ah, it does my old heart good to see you two married. (*NELL H. starts. GEO. nervously feels behind him for NELL R., who has jealously come up to the right and back of him. Jealous business. CAPT., not noticing, continues.*) I have had the large room off the library pre-

pared for you, and Miss Blanchard and Cornelia can choose between the spare rooms on the floor above. (*Drops their hands. GEO., NELL H., and NELL R. nearly faint.*)

GEO. and NELL R. (*Together*). The floor above?

NELL H. Captain—I—I should prefer for the present to be with Miss Blanchard.

GEO. I must go down town and get a cigar.

CAPT. There's a fresh box in your room.

GEO. Yes, but I only smoke mild cigars.

CAPT. I bought these extremely mild, especially for your use, so go ahead now, take your traps in the house, while I order up the dinner. (*Pushes GEO. over L., to where he dropped the luggage. GEO. picks up the traps, one by one, and drops them as fast as he picks them up.*

NELL H. *attempts to assist him, and hands bags, etc., to him. They have a general scramble with the luggage and finally exit, NELL H. pushing GEO. off door of house.*

CAPT. *leads NELL R. to the door.*) Permit me, my dear. (*Exit NELL R., door of house.*) Well, sister, what do you think of the match I've made for George?

COR. I'm afraid it'll be another case of "married in haste to repent at leisure." Men are such deceitful critters. (*Exit door of house.*)

CAPT. I wonder what she means? Well, anyhow, I'll order up such a feast as was never served in this house before. (*Exit C. to R.*)

Enter NELL R., door of house.

NELL R. I've a good notion to run away and go home to my mother!

Enter GEO., door of house.

GEO. Nellie, where are you?

NELL R. Here!

GEO. Thank goodness, we are alone at last! (*Hugs and kisses her.*)

Enter CAPT. C. from R. and COR., door of house.

CAPT. (*Coming down stage, yells furiously*). George!

GEO. (*Jumping L.*). Wow!

NELL R. (*Jumping R.*). Oh, what have I done?

COR. (*Crosses R.*). Oh, I'm shocked!

CAPT. I've a good notion to tell your wife on you, but presuming that this is your first offense, I will spare her feelings, and put a stop to this thing at once by escorting Miss Blanchard to her home and parents.

Enter NELL H., door of house.

GEO. (*Furious*). Sir! How dare you?

NELL H. Captain, don't you think that is rather severe on Miss Blanchard?

COR. (*Aside*). This certainly proves that "love is an enigma."

CAPT. (*Takes NELL R.'s hand. She sobs. Speaking to NELL H.*). There, my dear, I am well aware of your gentle, forgiving nature, but this has gone far enough! Reflect—Miss Blanchard's honor is at stake!

GEO. (*Furious*). Sir! I—

CAPT. Not another word! (*Exit, with NELL R., C. to R.*)

COR. (*Sits grandly on bench, R.*). I declare! I'm all tuckered out!

GEO. (*Runs after CAPT. and NELL R.*)

NELL H. (*Grabbing him by the coat-tail*). Stop! Are you crazy? (*They have a "tug-of-war"—he trying to exit and she pulling him back.*)

COR. He's actually running after that Blanchard gal, right before his wife's very eyes! Goodness me! I hope I'll never have the misfortune to marry such a man!

NELL H. (*Aside to GEO.*). What would you do?

GEO. (*Aside to NELL H.*). I'm going to confess everything!

NELL H. And be disinherited? No, you must not!

GEO. But what can I do?

NELL H. Wait! Watch your chance!

COR. (*To NELL H.*). Mrs. Richmond, ain't you tired of bothering your head about that wicked husband of yours? Take my advice and let him alone. He'll cool off all the quicker.

GEO. Cool off? I wish I could! I'm almost boiling over!

COR. (*To NELL H.*). Come, sit by me and rest. It will pacify your nerves.

NELL H. (*Aloud to GEO.*). Now, George, don't get excited. Keep cool, and everything will come out all right. (*Goes R.*)

COR. (*Aside*). Keep cool? Don't get excited? Well! She lets him off mighty easy after what he's done! I'll have to give her some pointers on handling men-folks.

GEO. Well, nobody wants me—I suppose the best thing I can do is to go and soak my head! (*Exit door of house.*)

COR. A very wise conclusion. It'll keep him out of mischief.

NELL H. (*Sighing*). I sincerely hope so. (*Sits beside COR.*)

COR. My dear, I am astonished at your wonderful display of self-control. It must require strong nerves.

NELL H. Yes, on the present occasion I must admit it does require considerable "nerve."

COR. Such scenes must be very annoying. But, tell me, since you have been able to conduct yourself in so calm a manner in the very face of your husband's duplicity—what do you consider the most trying circumstance of married life?

NELL H. (*Sighing*). Trying to get a husband, I should suppose.

COR. (*Laughing*). What a cheerful disposition you have.

NELL H. It is the secret of happiness.

COR. Yes, indeed. From what I have seen, I do believe you could compel yourself to be happy under any circumstances.

NELL H. (*Aside*). She little knows how unhappy I really am.

COR. But, speaking of secrets, do you know, I have a secret.

NELL H. Indeed? How do you manage to keep it?

COR. (*Touches heart, raising workbag as she does so*). It is concealed here.

NELL H. In the workbag?

COR. No, in the innermost depths of my gentle, trusting heart.

NELL H. A touch of heart disease probably. Have you consulted a physician?

COR. Alas, no! There is but one physician who can cure me, and he I have not seen.

NELL H. But you will—

COR. Very soon, I hope. I came here for that purpose.

NELL H. Here?

COR. Yes. I know he is coming to meet me! I feel that he is yearning for me!

NELL H. (*Trying to conceal her merriment*). And pray, who is this noted personage?

COR. (*In a giddy manner*). Oh, that is my secret, but I feel that it is too weighty to keep to myself any longer. It's Romeo! My Romeo! He wrote me he wore my image in his heart.

NELL H. I really believe you are in love.

COR. Yes, they say "true love is a spasm," and I've had several already. (*Giddily*.) Te-he! Te-he! Us girls become so giddy when we fall in love!

NELL H. (*Eyeing her suspiciously*). But where did you make the acquaintance of this—Lothario?

COR. I answered an advertisement in the paper. He advertised for a wife.

NELL H. (*Suppressing laughter*). Oh!

COR. I wrote him to meet me here, as I was all alone at home. He calls me his "Nellie," and I thought I had best tell you about him, as when he arrives he will ask for "Nellie," and you might think he was looking for you or Miss Blanchard.

NELL H. (*Sarcastically*). A very wise precaution, I assure you. But you have never seen your Romeo. How can you be certain that you love him?

COR. Oh, I am sure that I shall. He writes me such charming, poetical letters. See! I have them with me. (*Takes bundle of letters from bag*.) Forty-six of them—all tied up with a yellow ribbon! (*Looks around nervously*.) Come with me to the summer house at the other end of the garden, and I'll read them all to you!

NELL H. (*Trying to escape*). I should be delighted, but—

COR. Come, now, I shan't take "no" for an answer.

NELL H. But—my—my husband—

COR. Oh, he can wait. It'll do him good, and you needn't be jealous of that Blanchard gal. Brother Obadiah will keep her out of your husband's way all right. (*Exit, tragically, R. 2 E.*)

NELL H. Forty-six letters? And she's going to read them all to me? I'm afraid I'd feel like jumping overboard and saying, "Here goes nothing," if I should ever live to be like her. (*Exit R. 2 E.*)

Enter FERDINAND LIGHTHEAD C. from R. Very foppish dude, with ridiculous mannerisms. Business of walking up and down, swallowing cane handle, etc.

FERDY. Now, do you know, I've been wondering, when it wains, whether the wain comes down, or the earth goes up to meet it? Awa, good idea, by jove! If I can prove that it does, I might become a weal wain-maker, and make a fortune. (*Laughing.*) A-ha-A-ha! Deuced clevah, by jove! What do you think? No, that's wong, you know. My fathaw told me I'd bettah not twy to think—it might weaken my intellect. Awa, good idea, by jove! (*Walking up and down.*) Why, I'll wagaw I've been heah five nio-ments, and I haven't seen Miss "Nellie" yet.

Enter GEO., door of house.

GEO. (*Crossing to R.*). Talk about suffering in the fire and brimstone of Hades! It couldn't beat the peck of trouble I'm in now! (*Noticing FERDY's peculiar actions.*) Hello! Where did it spring from? Yes—no—yes—it is alive!

FERDY. (*Not perceiving GEO., walks up and down L., as if expecting someone.*)

GEO. (*Aside*). Ah, I understand. It has escaped from the Lunatic Asylum next door. I'll capture him and take him back. (*Edges toward FERDY.*)

FERDY. (*Sees GEO., and edges the other way.*)

GEO. He's a tricky son-of-a-gun all right. (*Waves his hand at FERDY in a peculiar manner.*)

FERDY. (*Aside*). Deuced stwange, you know! I do believe he's escaped from the Lunatic Asylum. I must humor him. (*Makes the same motion of the hand in response to GEO.*)

GEO. (*Places his thumbs in his ears and wiggles his fingers.*)

FERDY. (*Imitates GEO.*)

GEO. (*Shakes his hand in front of himself, and chases it down stage.*)

FERDY. (*Imitates GEO.*)

GEO. (*Dances around, pretending to catch butterflies, etc.*)

FERDY. (*Imitates GEO.*)

GEO. (*Suddenly grabs FERDY and tries to drag him up stage.*)

FERDY. (*Drawing back*). Stop! You hurt, don't you know. (*Aside*.) Gwacious! Supposing he should be dangewous?

GEO. (*Soothingly*). There—that's all right—come along with me and we'll have a grand old time.

FERDY. But I don't want to have a grand old time, you know, doncherknow.

GEO. All right, then we'll go home. (*Locking arms with FERDY, he sings.*) "We won't go home until morning, oh, we won't go home until morning!"

FERDY. (*Half-crying, breaks away*). I want to go home to my mamma!

GEO. (*Aside*). Ah, now I'll get him to go. (*To FERDY.*) Come ahead; we'll both go.

FERDY. Awa—go away, you naughty man! I don't know you, doncherknow!

GEO. Say! Do you know where you live?

FERDY. With my papa and my mamma, of course; three doors from here, down the road.

GEO. Well, what are you doing here?

FERDY. I—I came to see Miss Nellie—

GEO. (*Suspiciously*). What "Nellie?"

FERDY. Why, Nellie Blanchard, of course.

GEO. (*Aside*). My wife! (*To FERDY.*) Well, she doesn't want to see you!

FERDY. She does so—she wrote me to call.

GEO. Wrote you?

FERDY. Yes, and here is the letter. (*Hands letter to GEO.*)

GEO. Give it to me! (*Aside.*) I'd like to punch his head! (*Reads.*) "My dear Romeo!" (*Aside.*) So! His name is "Romeo," eh? I'll Romeo her when I see her! (*Reads.*) "Meet me at once at Captain Skinner's, 'Oak Farm,' Westchester. Ever your own dear Nellie." (*To FERDY.*) Where did you get this?

FERDY. (*Frightened*). She—she sent it to me.

GEO. (*Aside*). Well, this is certainly the limit! So, Nellie has been flirting on the quiet, eh? Well, I'll just put a stop to this business at once! (*To FERDY.*) You—you—say you—the best thing you can do is to leave—go—get out—see? (*Chases FERDY up C., shaking his fist at him.*)

Enter CAPT. and NELL R. (C. from R.)

FERDY. (*Backing up, steps on CAPT.'s feet.*)

CAPT. (*Dances around, yelling with pain*). Wow! what made you do it? Oh, wow! (*Recovering.*) My dear Ferdinand, while I fail to appreciate your method of greeting, yet I must say that you are just the person I have been looking for.

GEO. (*Going down R., and putting letter in pocket. Aside*). Ferdinand? So this is her old sweetheart, and she calls him her "Romeo." Oh, this is rich! (*During the above FERDY goes to NELL R. and shakes her hand.*)

CAPT. (*To FERDY*). This is Miss Blanchard—(*Noticing them shaking hands.*) But I perceive you are already acquainted—so much the better.

GEO. (*Aside*). So much the worse for me!

NELL R. Yes. Mr. Lighthouse and I are old friends.

GEO. (*Jealous. Aside*). And very dear friends, no doubt!

CAPT. And I hope to make you more than friends.

NELL R. (*Aside*). What can he mean?

GEO. (*Aside*). I'll swear they're already more than friends.

CAPT. This young lady has been subjected to the most annoying attentions from a certain young reprobate—

GEO. (*Aside*). That's me.

FERDY. Mercy! How shocking!

CAPT. For whom she, of course, has no affection.

FERDY. (*Beaming on NELL R.*). Of course not.

GEO. (*Aside*). Why should she, fool that I am?

CAPT. (*Suddenly*). George, come here!

GEO. (*Goes up stage, sulkily.*)

CAPT. Mr. Lighthouse, let me introduce my nephew, George Richmond—a Santiago hero—(*Aside*) and a heart-breaker as well. (*GEO. squeezes FERDY's hand until he doubles up in pain. NELL R. smiles at GEO.*)

FERDY. Oh, my! Deuced clevah, by jove!

CAPT. (*To FERDY*). He has just returned with his bride, and we're all going to celebrate, and as I have so many things to attend to, I want you to entertain Miss Blanchard for the day, and I must caution you to be very attentive, as she is a most exacting young lady.

FERDY. Chawmed, doncherknow.

NELL R. (*Protesting*). But, Captain, I—

CAPT. Not a word! (*Aside to her.*) He's soft, I admit, but he isn't a trifler! (*Looks severely at GEO.*)

GEO. (*Attempting civility to FERDY*). So you are Mr. Lighthouse?

FERDY. Ya-as. How funny!

GEO. (*Clenching his fist behind him. Aside*). Oh, how I'd like to hit him!

CAPT. (*To FERDY*). There now, run along, and don't be late for dinner. Do the gallant, my boy (*slaps FERDY on the back so hard he nearly collapses*), and remember: "Faint heart never won fair lady."

FERDY. Ya-as. Deuced clevah, by jove! (*Leads NELL R. down L.*)

GEO. (*Aside*). Uncle is actually encouraging that idiot to court my wife!

CAPT. Whatever you do, be careful not to get into the

Lunatic Asylum next door. (*To GEO.*) They'll make a fine match, eh, George?

GEO. (*Aside*). I can't stand this much longer.

CAPT. Now, George, I must caution you to be more attentive to your wife. It isn't right for you to neglect her, and especially so soon after you're married. (*Points to NELL R. and FERDY.*) Look there! See how affectionate they are, and they're not even engaged yet.

GEO. (*Aside*). Talk about the tortures of the mediæval ages! They weren't a marker to this!

CAPT. I'll bet they'll be engaged before the day is over.

GEO. (*Aside*). I'll confess the whole business. (*To CAPT.*) Uncle, I—

CAPT. Stop where you are, and go to your wife! I must attend to the love feast! You'll be sorry for all this neglect some day. (*Exit hastily, door of house.*)

GEO. ↑ (*Going down R.*). He won't even listen to me! (*Perceives FERDY and NELL R. Business of jealousy.*) Heavens! If this keeps up much longer, I'll go clean off the handle!

FERDY. Awa, Miss Nellie, you don't know how glad I am to see you again.

GEO. (*Aside*). Undoubtedly.

FERDY. I think an awful lot of you.

NELL R. (*Impatiently*). Do you?

GEO. (*Aside*). I'd like to have him up a dark alley! I'd show what I think of him!

FERDY. (*Takes NELL R.'s arm, and tries to stroll off L., but each time she pivots around and walks back*). Awa, do you know—there's a field down the road—

GEO. (*Aside*). Gee! But his powers of observation are highly developed!

FERDY. And it's just full of lovely golden-rod!

GEO. (*Aside*). And I'm just full of cussedness!

FERDY. (*Surprised that she turns him back every time he attempts to exit*). Awa, don't you like flowers?

NELL R. (*Desperately*). Not golden-rod. The only flowers I like are Jack roses.

GEO. (*Aside*). Well, judging from her affection for him, she must be fond of jackasses!

FERDY. By jove, we have a whole hothouse full of roses at home! Just come with me and we'll pick them all.

NELL R. (*Nervously*). I'd rather not. It's too near dinner-time.

FERDY. Very well; you needn't go. Just wait here, and I'll go and get them for you. (*Going R.*) By jove, I'll bring her a whole wagonload! (*Waving his hand to NELL R.*) Ta-ta! Ta-ta! See you later! See you sooner! Ta-ta! Doncherknow! Ta-ta!

GEO. (*So jealous he can stand it no longer, grabs FERDY by the collar and the seat of his trousers, and runs him off (C.) to R. Then coming down C.*) Well, thank heaven, he's gone!

NELL R. (*Provoked*). Well?

GEO. Oh, I forgot. I suppose you're sorry!

NELL R. Sorry for what?

GEO. Why, that—gone for Jack roses!

NELL R. I do not understand.

GEO. Of course you don't! (*Dancing around in anger.*) Of course you don't! (*Mysteriously.*) Oh, Romeo! (*Yells.*) Romeo! (*Yells louder.*) Romeo!

NELL R. (*Aside*). Our troubles have turned his head. (*To GEO., soothingly.*) Dear George, don't get angry—

GEO. Not a bit of it! (*Furious.*) I wouldn't get angry for the world!

NELL R. (*Placing her hand on his shoulder*). It won't do a bit of good.

GEO. (*Jealous*). Has it gone that far?

NELL R. (*Eyeing him suspiciously*). I'm afraid it has!

GEO. (*Angry*). Then the best thing we can do is to quit! (*He means to separate.*)

NELL R. I think so, too, George. (*She means to leave the place.*)

GEO. She takes it coolly enough. I don't suppose she ever cared a snap for me! Oh, what a fool I've been!

NELL R. (*Aside*). I do wish he'd stop that muttering. It quite unnerves me.

GEO. (*Half-angry, half-sad.*) When are you going?

NELL R. At once, George, if you wish it.

GEO. (*Bitterly*). Indeed? And what have I to do about it?

NELL R. (*Chilled*). Why, everything—where you go, I go; and where I go, you go.

GEO. But what are you going to do with “Romeo?”

NELL R. Do with whom?

GEO. You know who I mean, all right! Romeo! Romeo!

NELL R. (*Not comprehending, but laughing*). Oh, he'll be all right.

GEO. (*Aside*). Oh, of course, he'll be all right.

NELL R. (*Aside*). If I can only get him away from here, it may cure him! (*To GEO.*) Now, George, you wait right here till I get our things. I shan't be a minute. (*Exit quickly, door of house.*)

GEO. She's actually dancing with glee at the thought of running away with that pie-faced dude! Even my wife gone back on me! Oh, this is too much! Well, I suppose I may as well go and jump overboard! (*Goes L., slowly.*) No! That would please them too much! I'll live! Live to be revenged! I'll wait for my uncle's money, and become an old bachelor, or a grass widow, or something! I'll—I'll—(*Walking around, is suddenly struck by a new idea*). Ah—ah—Nellie Huntington and I are passing as man and wife—she's a pretty girl—yes, and a sensible girl as well! She didn't seem at all reluctant to pass as my wife. She might be willing to remain so! By gracious, I'll ask her! Hold on—I'll have to get rid of the other one first! Heaven help me in the step I'm taking—but she drove me to it! Think of it—preferring a lop-eared dude to me—and throw it in my face at that! But I'll get even with her! Just wait till I'm married to—hello! here comes Miss Huntington now. I'll sound her, and see if she likes the part she's playing well enough to keep it up forever.

71 H. Enter NELL H., R. 2 E.

NELL H. What, still sulking? It won't help things a particle. Why don't you cheer up?

GEO. (*Shyly*). How—how do you— (*Suddenly grabs her hand and shakes it.*) How are you?

NELL H. (*Surprised*). Quite well, thank you. (*Aside.*) The trouble has been too much for him. I'm afraid it's turned his head.

GEO. (*Confused*). You—you—where's Aunt Cornelia?

NELL H. I left her in the summer house. Shall I call her?

GEO. No—no! No—no! I merely wanted to— (*Aside.*) I can't ask her! Every time I go to speak, it chokes me! There's no denying it—I do love my own little Nellie, in spite of her affection for "Romeo!"

NELL H. (*Who has strolled up R. C.*). Do you see that man?

GEO. Yes, of course I do. What of it?

NELL H. That is Mr. Richard Hamilton. (*Agitated.*) I wouldn't have him meet me here for the world!

GEO. (*Aside*). I do believe that even she is in love with somebody else!

NELL H. I may as well inform you that Mr. Hamilton and I are engaged, but for reasons of my own I wish to avoid him for the present.

GEO. (*Aside*). That settles it! The next woman I make love to will be deaf, dumb, blind, halt, lame and have no teeth! Then I may stand some chance of keeping her to myself!

NELL H. He must not see me! And don't you dare to tell him that I am passing off as your wife! (*Runs to door of house.*) Remember! Your uncle—and your wife! (*Exits door of house.*)

GEO. Oh, hang my wife! Here I must keep her loathsome conduct a secret—absolutely condone her wickedness—in order not to arouse my uncle's suspicions! If it isn't enough to drive a man insane, then I'll—but here is Mr. Hamilton.

Enter RICHARD HAMILTON, C. from R.

RICH. (*Coming down*). Excuse me, sir. I am Richard Hamilton. I trust that you will pardon my intrusion, but as I was just passing I wondered if I might be permitted to inspect your beautiful grounds.

GEO. Certainly. It will be a pleasure to show them to you.

RICH. Oh, no; you needn't bother to accompany me. I should not desire to take you from your duties, and I suppose this is your busy hour——

GEO. (*puzzled*). Busy hour?

RICH. Yes. I understood the patients were given their daily exercise at this time.

GEO. (*dryly*). Oh, yes! (*Aside.*) He has mistaken this for the Lunatic Asylum next door and me for the keeper! A good idea! I'll get even with the whole crowd for treating me so shabbily! I'll pass them all off as lunatics! Uncle, Miss Huntington, wife and all!

RICH. I wanted to inquire particularly in regard to music——

GEO. Yes, we all like music—great thing—has “charms to soothe the ear of the savage beast,” you know.

RICH. (*Aside*). He seems a trifle stupid himself, but I suppose it comes from associating so continually with the poor unfortunates. (*To GEO.*) I must inform you that I am very much interested in music, especially in regard to its effect upon persons and animals.

GEO. I see; you like to “try it on the dog.”

RICH. (*Smiling absently*). Precisely, and I hope you will permit me to observe your method of applying the musical effect upon your patients—that is if——

GEO. Oh, don't mention it. I shall be delighted, I assure you.

RICH. Very well, then; I shall just step to my car and instruct the chauffeur to return without me. It will take but a moment. (*Bows profoundly and exit, C. to R.*)

GEO. (*Returning to bow*). Now, we'll try the musical system! But I must not carry the joke too far. He's liable to investigate and ruin all my plans.

Enter NELL, door of house.

NELL. Sure, sir; but Miss Blanchard do be wantin' to know if yez'll assist her in packin' her things. I tried to help her, but she sent me away. Sure she's cryin', sir, an' takin' on terrible——

GEO. Don't bother me now.

NELL. Yes, sir.

GEO. I say no!

NELL. No, sir.

GEO. (*Roars*). I did, I tell you! (*Looks off C.*)

NELL. Mercy me! What's the matter wid thim all? Faith, I has me suspicions. (*Taps her forehead significantly.*) That lun-nat-tic asylum next door is altogether too close.

Enter NELL H., door of house, heavily veiled.

NELL H. Has he gone?

GEO. Yes, but he'll return in a minute.

NELL H. Oh, goodness, I must go! (*Goes to door of house and nearly runs into NELL R.*)

Enter NELL R., door of house, loaded down with the bags, wraps, etc., carried by GEO. and her at opening of act.

NELL R. (*Sobbing*). George! George!

GEO. Don't bother me now! Wait! Wait!

NELL H. (*To NELL R.*). Why, my dear, what is the matter?

NELL R. (*Pantomimes that GEO. is insane*).

NELL (*Going down L.*). This is more fun than a ten-cent circus!"

Enter COR. hastily, R. 2 E.

COR. (*Screaming*). Oh! Oh! Oh!

ALL. What is the matter?

COR. A man! A man in the garden!

Enter CAPT., door of house.

CAPT. Who's hurt?

COR. A man! A man!

CAPT. Where? (*Looks off, R.*)

Enter FERDY, C. from R., with wheelbarrow full of roses.

FERDY (*to NELL R.*). Here are your Jack roses, Miss Nellie! (*Looks at NELL R. and fails to see where he is going, so by mistake runs the wheel between CAPT.'s legs.*)

CAPT. (*Falling back in wheelbarrow*). Help! Murder! Police!

GEO. (*up C. L.*). A lunatic has escaped from the Insane Asylum and is coming this way!

CAPT. Dance! Dance! Everyone of you! (*Gets up.*) It's the only way to pacify a lunatic! Dance and sing like me. (*Each one sings a portion of a different song and each dances in a peculiar manner, different from the rest. Hurry music, P, till curtain down.*)


Enter RICH., C. from R., fanning himself with his hat as if overheated from walking rapidly.

GEO. (*dancing in a ridiculous manner; yells at RICHARD*). Join in! Join in! It's a part of the "musical system!"

QUICK CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*Fancy chamber, boxed in 3d grooves. Interior backing 4th grooves. Center door. Window in flat R. C. Doors R. 2 and L. 2. Table down C. Sofa R. Hot-air radiator down L. Chair R. of table. Cane-bottom chair near radiator. Lively music till curtain up.*

Enter NELL H., door L. 

NELL H. I am afraid I've made a great mistake. As is usual in such cases, I have helped to extricate George and his wife from an awkward position, only to place myself in a worse one. My darling Richard is in the same house with me, and yet we must be as strangers, for I dare not reveal my identity. It would ruin George if I were to confess the part I am playing, and yet, if Richard should recognize me, it would surely estrange us forever! He will meet and converse with the others. My name will be mentioned as the supposed "happy bride," and one little word is liable to ruin my future happiness. If I could only get away from here! But, no! I cannot desert them now, and yet if I stay——



Enter GEO. R.

GEO. It's no use talking, I—(*starts to exit door C.* NELL H. *tries to intercept him and he dodges her.*)

NELL H. (*Catching him by the arm and wheeling him around facing her.*) Well, my dear hubby, what will be your next surprise?

GEO. (*Stopping so suddenly that he stands on one foot.*) I haven't the least idea.

NELL H. Well! You have so far succeeded in mixing things up in a most delightful tangle. I sincerely hope you will be able to find your way out again.

GEO. (*Testily.*) Now, my dear Miss—

NELL H. Hush! You forget! Mrs.!

GEO. (*Affably.*) Your most obedient—

NELL H. Now, don't waste valuable time over trifles. Tell me—Richard—

GEO. Is waiting in the conservatory.

NELL H. What does he think?

GEO. That this is an admirably conducted Lunatic Asylum.

NELL H. And I?

GEO. One of the unfortunate inmates.

NELL H. (*Startled.*) He has not recognized me?

GEO. Probably.

NELL H. Heavens! What shall I do?

GEO. I was just looking for you to propose that you meet him.

NELL H. Impossible!

GEO. Not with the consent of both parties.

NELL H. But the parts we are playing—our secret! He would hardly believe the truth, even if you dared to offer an explanation.

GEO. Not in the least necessary.

NELL H. How abrupt you are! Even a casual observer would have no cause to doubt that we were really man and wife! But pray explain your plan of action.

GEO. He thinks that I am the superintendent of the asylum, and if he has recognized you he must, of course, believe that you are violently insane.

NELL H. That's pleasant!

GEO. It may help to reunite you.

NELL H. Never.

GEO. Why not? You love him—you have quarreled—his fault, no doubt. I'll lead him to believe that your supposed misfortune has been occasioned by his misconduct, and then not only excite his pity but so alarm him as to make him an humble supplicant for reinstatement in your affections——

NELL H. (*Eagerly*). Yes—yes——

GEO. And then—well, as Laura Jean Libbey would say, "You'll be happy forever after."

NELL H. Enough! I'll consent.

GEO. Very well, then. Tie an apron around your neck—carry a broom or a dustpan in your hand—mutter to yourself—sing snatches of pitiful ballads, and we will soon show the repentent Richard what a witless, despairing creature you have become.

NELL H. I'll be ready in five minutes. (*Exit door L.*)

GEO. It's the "irony of fate" that I, so completely disappointed in my own love affairs, should now develop into a simmering matchmaker. Well, now I've put my foot in it for fair! The next thing I know I'll be running a full-fledged matrimonial bureau. (*Exit door C. to L.*)

Enter NELL R., door L., still loaded down with the traveling bags, etc.

NELL R. I declare! I am completely exhausted from carrying these things around.

Enter COR. door C.

NELL R. (*To COR.*). Have you seen George?

COR. I think he is in the library with his wife.

NELL R. (*Forgetting*). His wife? (*Recovering.*) Oh, yes; thank you. I'll look for him there. (*Business of sobbing, dropping bundles, picking them up, etc., and exit door L.*)

COR. (*To NELL R.*). You'd better take my advice and stop chasing after George now that he is married. (*Solus.*) Why, the impudent hussy! She's every bit as bad as George

is. I shall have to tell his wife the kind of a friend she has! (*Sighs.*) Oh dear, I wonder why Romeo doesn't come? If he only knew how I yearn for his manly presence; how I long to be embraced and cuddled in his loving arms, and have him call me his "own little Nellie." Oh dear, it seems as if I were nearing the entrance of an earthly paradise, where there will be but "two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one"—Romeo and I! (*Sits on sofa R.*) I have tried to comfort myself with his letters. (*Takes letters from bag.*) Forty-six of them—just my age—a tender missive for each year of my life. I know them all by heart—such poetical sentiment—such divine comparisons. Oh, Romeo! Romeo! Where art thou?

Enter NELL, door C. from L., singing the chorus of some popular comic song, and carrying a letter.

COR. I mustn't let that servant see these letters. I'll take them to my room. Oh, Romeo, where art thou? (*Exit door R., carrying the letters, but leaving the workbag on the sofa.*)

NELL. The postman just left this letter. It says on the outside that it is for "Miss Nellie." Now, who am I goin' ter give it to? That's the question. Sure there's Miss Nellie Blanchard, the gal the young masther is so stuck on, an' Masther George's wife, what was Miss Nellie Huntington, and the Captain's old maid sister, Cornelia; sure I've heard him call her "Nellie," and then there's me—plain "Nell"—(*reflects*)—why not? Sure "Nell" sthands fer "Nellie," and phy shouldn't I git a letter? Faith it wouldn't be the first one I got! Anyhow, if I give it to any of thim other "Nellies," sure wouldn't I be takin' chances on thim a readin' my letters? Well, I guess not! "Possession is nine p'int of the law," an' I'll take ice-cream soda fer the other p'int, an' that's law fer yez? (*Opens letter and reads.*) "My darling Nellie." (*Spoken.*) That's me, sure! (*Reads.*)

"I hasten to thy side,
I'll soon make thee my bride!
Then o'er the ocean wide
Together we will ride!"

(*Spoken.*) Oh-ho-ho! Look at that, now! (*Reads.*) "Soon after you receive this note I shall come to claim you as my bride. Ten thousand fond kisses. Ever your Romeo!" (*Spoken.*) *Ten thousand fond kisses?* Oh, Romeo, Romeo, where art thou? (*Imitates tragedy business.*) An' that reminds me that me—me other fellow, Patsy Donoghue—he's me steady—well, Patsy is goin' to perform at a minstrel entertainment, an' axed me to make him some burnt cork to black up his face wid. I burned the cork all right, but sure I has nothin' to put it in. (*Sees CORNELIA'S workbag.*) There's an old workbag. I don't know whose it is, but sure it won't be wrong fer me to borrow it fer a charitable entertainment. It'll be just the thing fer poor Patsy to keep his burnt cork in. (*Looks in bag.*) An' faith there's a powder rag all ready fer him to use.

Enter FERDY, door C. from L.

FERDY. (*As if laughing at something outside.*) Awa—deuced clevah, by jove!

NELL. Sure, it's the fellow what dumped the Captain into the wheelbarrow. I wonder what he's doin' all dressed up? (*To FERDY.*) Who are yez afther lookin' fer?

FERDY. Awa—I want Miss Nellie, doncherknow.

NELL. (*Aside.*) Holy Moses! It's Romeo! (*To FERDY.*) Sure, sir, I am "Miss Nellie." (*Goes up to him as if expecting to be hugged.*)

FERDY. (*Edging away.*) You? (*Disgusted.*) Awa, by jove, you're not the one! Doncherknow, you're not a miss at all.

NELL. (*Aside.*) I wonder if he takes me fer a man in disguise? (*To FERDY.*) Well, what are ye sthandin' there fer? Why don't yez put yer arms around me an' smother me wid tin thousan' fond kisses, an' ride across the ocean wid me, an'—

FERDY. (*Aside.*) Nellie must have shown her my note, and now she's getting familiar with me—beastly habit—this familiarity—you know, you know—doncherknow. I must be weal severe with her. (*To NELL.*) Awa, you know, doncherknow, lead me to Miss Blanchard, you know, doncherknow.

NELL (*Aside*). Listen to the loikes av that, now. (*Imitates FERDY*.) "Lead me to Miss Blanchard, you know, doncherknow." What a pity I has no halter.

FERDY (*Staring at her*). Deuced stwange, doncherknow——

NELL (*Aside*). One slap on the wrist an' he'd drop to pieces.

N. & M. R. Enter NELL R., door L.

FERDY (*Going to NELL R.*) Awa, my deah Miss Nellie!

NELL R. (*Annoyed, aside*). He here again?

NELL. (*Aside*). So that's the way the wind blows! Well, I wishes thim luck, I'm sure. (*Imitating FERDY*.) But I must go an' put the burnt cork in the bag for Patsy dear. (*Exit door R., carrying COR.'s workbag and imitating FERDY'S walk.*)

FERDY (*To NELL R., awkwardly*). Awa——

NELL R. (*Absently*). I was looking for——

FERDY. Were you, weally? Let me help you find it.

NELL R. Find what?

FERDY. Awa, I don't know, doncherknow—whatevah you are looking for, of course.

NELL R. (*Aside*). Gracious! What a perfect idiot he is!

FERDY (*Sits on sofa, jumps up and bows, etc.*). Awa, aftah you, you know, doncherknow. Lovely day, isn't it?

NELL R. (*Reluctantly sits on sofa*). Yes.

FERDY (*Sitting on sofa beside her*). Looks like wain, you know, doncherknow, doesn't it? (*Nervous business of crossing legs, etc.*)

NELL R. I—I guess so. (*Aside*.) I'd order him out if I wasn't afraid of offending the Captain.

FERDY. Awa, doncherknow, I was awfully pleased with your note.

NELL R. (*Aside*). He must have heard me singing and noticed my "high C." (*To FERDY*.) I'm afraid you flatter me, but you know I was always fond of singing.

FERDY. Can you sing? Weally, what a chawming person you are!

NELL R. (*Aside*). He evidently did not hear me sing. What can he mean?

FERDY (*Timidly*). Awa——

Enter CAPT., door C. from L.

CAPT. (*Standing in the door, aside*). Well, shiver my timbers if they ain't making love!

FERDY (*Aside*). I wish she'd say something about our correspondence. It's deuced awkward, doncherknow! (*Embarrassed.*)

NELL R. (*Shifts about uneasily.*)

CAPT. (*Aside*). It makes me laugh the way these modern lovers beat about the bush. Now, when I was a boy, people spoke right out, and it was all over in a minute.

FERDY (*To NELL R.*). Awa, do you know what I called for?

NELL R. No, I haven't the least idea. (*Aside.*) Gracious! Here I must sit and try to be civil to this blockhead, and there's no telling what may have happened to George by this time.

FERDY (*Noticing CAPT., is more embarrassed*).

CAPT. (*Motions to FERDY not to reveal his presence; then encourages him to make love to NELL R.*), 9. ME

FERDY (*To NELL R.*). Awa, can't you guess why I'm here? I've known you an awfully long time, doncherknow. Friends of childhood—little boys together—no, no—little girls together—no, no—no, no—I mean little boys and little girls together, and all that sort of thing, you know, you know, doncherknow! (*Giggling.*) Te-he, te-he, te-he!

CAPT. (*Aside*). He evidently believes in making love on the installment plan.

NELL R. (*Uneasily*). Yes, we have been acquainted for some time, Mr. Lighthouse.

FERDY. Ah, no; call me Ferdy, doncherknow!

NELL R. (*Aside*). Call him Ferdy? What does he mean?

CAPT. (*Motions FERDY to continue. Aside*). Go it—go it, young fellow. You'll get there.

FERDY (*To NELL R.*). Awa, what do people generally do after they've known each other a long time?

NELL R. I am sure I don't know. (*Aside.*) I really believe he's trying to make love to me. I must get away somehow. (*Rises.*)

FERDY (*Aside*). Now is my chance. I've got her up to

the point, you know. (*Slips off the sofa and kneels at her feet.*) Awa, Miss Nellie, I—I——

CAPT. (*Aside*). This is getting too hot for me; I'll get out. (*Exit C. to R.*)

FERDY. I—I—I've lost my appetite, doncherknow!

NELL R. Goodness! You must be hungry. I'll go and tell the cook.

FERDY. No, no. I want to tell you——

NELL R. (*Going L.*) But it'll never do for you to talk so much on an empty stomach! I'll get you something at once, if it's only a sandwich. (*Exit door L.*)

FERDY. But Miss Nellie, I don't want a sandwich. I—I—By jove, I've made a wegulah ass of myself. (*Rising and going L.*) Miss Nellie! Miss Nellie! (*Exit door L.*)

g-R. Enter GEO. and RICH., *door C. from L.*

GEO. Yes, music is a great thing. Now, when I feel tired and worried from the arduous duties of the asylum here I just hike to the nearest music hall or some burlesque show and——

RICH. (*Surprised*). I trust that you do not approve of that class of entertainment.

GEO. Oh, no; I only go to be soothed. (*Aside.*) Now, I'll give it to him straight from the shoulder. (*To RICH.*) Did you ever hear a lunatic sing?

RICH. No, I cannot say that I ever have.

GEO. (*Aside*). If Miss Huntington would only sing, now, it would settle the whole business!

NELL H. (*Outside L., sings the chorus of some popular ballad.*)

GEO. (*Delighted, aside*). Ah! (*To RICH.*) There is one now.

RICH. (*Aside*). That voice! I'd know it anywhere! And yet it must be impossible! It could not be Nellie!

GEO. (*Aside*). She's working her end of the business all right. That voice would soften the heart of a rent collector.

RICH. (*Aside*). Heavens! If it should be true!

GEO. (*Aside*). I begin to feel a little woozy myself.

NELL H. (*Stops singing.*)

RICH. Who was that singing?

GEO. Oh, only one of the patients.

RICH. Yes, I know—but her name?

GEO. Nellie Huntington.

RICH. (*Excitedly*). What?

GEO. I said Nellie Huntington. What is the matter, are you acquainted with her?

RICH. Um—ah—I—ah— (*Aside.*) No, I cannot tell him that I am the cause of her affliction. I must use other means to see her. (*To GEO.*) The desolation of these poor mortals affects me strangely. Pray, let us pass on. (*Aside.*) Heavens! If I had only known!

CAPT. (*Outside C., calls*). George!

GEO. (*Aside.*) That's Uncle Obadiah!

CAPT. (*Outside C., calls*). George!

GEO. (*Aside.*) Now I'm in a pretty mess!

RICH. For whom is he calling?

GEO. Oh, no one. He went crazy trying to ascertain whether King George IV. was assassinated or merely drank himself to death, and now, after long years of incarceration, he still has "George" on the brain.

RICH. Oh, I perceive. (*Aside.*) Oh, my poor Nellie, amid such surroundings!

2 R. N.R. Enter NELL R., door L.

NELL R. (*To GEO.*). Oh, George!

RICH. (*Aside to GEO.*). Why, who is that?

GEO. (*Aside to RICH.*). Oh, that's another one of the lunatics. She fancies that I am her long-lost brother. She always calls me "George."

RICH. (*Aside to GEO.*). You must have an exceedingly good disposition to so patiently cater to the delusions of these poor unfortunates.

GEO. (*Aside to RICH.*). Oh, it's a part of the business. (*Aside.*) That wife of mine has probably repented, but I won't forgive her!

CAPT. (*Outside C., calls*). George!

RICH. (*Aside to GEO.*). He calls again. Whom does he desire?

GEO. Oh, no one. A mere hallucination, I assure you.

RICH. Oh. (*Business of looking off C.*)

NELL R. (*Motions to GEO. to cross to her.*)

GEO. (*Aside*). Confound it! My uncle coming—my wife waiting—I'm between two fires! If I go to her, he'll meet uncle, and if I don't, she's liable to run away with that pie-faced dude! (*Motions NELL R. to exit.*)

NELL R. (*Aside*). I wonder what is the matter with George? (*Exit, door L.*) →

GEO. (*Aside*). I must see my wife, and tell her that this fellow Hamilton is a lunatic. Then she'll be sure not to speak to him. Then if I can intercept uncle, I may be able to keep him out of the way until Miss Huntington meets her Richard! (*To RICH.*) I shall have to ask you to excuse me for a few moments. One of the patients fell down the elevator shaft—cut in two—cut in three—cut in four—

RICH. I beg of you not to let me detain you from any duty.

GEO. I shall return as soon as I have pacified the lunatics. (*Exit hastily, door L.*)

RICH. It might be a good idea for him to pacify himself. Ah, my poor, darling Nellie! If I could but see her! (*Goes R., partly opens door R., and looks out.*)

Enter CAPT., door C. from R.

CAPT. (*Carrying a shotgun, which he examines*). At last I've got this gun properly repaired. The next time I go hunting, it'll shoot to kill!

RICH. (*Aside*). Strange delusion. He seems to have a desire for gore!

CAPT. (*Perceiving RICH.*). Look here! What do you mean by sneaking into my house and peeking through the door cracks?

RICH. (*Taken unawares*). I—I—I was looking for someone.

CAPT. Oh, come now, that's too thin. You get right out of here in a hurry! Quick, now! Or I'll fill you so full of shot that you won't be able to cart yourself away! (*Raises gun in a threatening manner.*)

RICH. (*Aside*). It's strange they allow a lunatic to carry a gun. Even if it isn't loaded, he is liable to strike

someone over the head in a fit of violence. I must temporize with him and try to secure it. (*To CAPT.*) That's a fine walking stick you have there.

CAPT. (*Aside*). Walking stick? (*Grins.*) Now I understand. He's escaped from the Lunatic Asylum next door. I must capture him and take him back. (*To RICH.*) That isn't a walking stick. It's a fried egg. One of the kind that sticks pins in turnip tops.

RICH. (*Smiling at CAPT.'s supposed insanity*). Yes? How do you manage to work it?

CAPT. Oh, you don't work it. All you do is to squeeze it, and it works itself. See? (*Goes through the motions of aiming and firing gun.*) Do you want to try it? (*Hands gun to RICH.*)

RICH. (*Taking the gun. Aside*). I'll aim at one of the dogs I saw outside. He'll think we're fighting a naval battle. (*Goes to window, points gun and shoots. Glass crash heard, as if breaking window. Noise of dog yelping outside. Coming down R.*) Now, what have I done?

CAPT. (*Running to window and looking out*). Well, hang me, if he hasn't shot my favorite hound! (*Runs at RICH. furiously.*) Here! Gimme that gun!

RICH. (*Aside*). I wish the Superintendent would return. I must keep this gun from this lunatic, or somebody is liable to be shot.

CAPT. Gimme that gun, I say.

RICH. Keep away! I will not give it to you!

Hurry music.

CAPT. (*Rushes at RICH. Comedy struggle for gun, ad. lib. Finally RICH. throws CAPT. on his back, and stands over him, gun in hand.*)

RICH. (*Dramatically*). Hush! Be quiet! I'll call the keeper! (*Exit, door C. to L., with gun.*)

CAPT. (*Still down*). Call the keeper? I wonder what he means? (*Arising.*) Here! You! Never mind about the keeper! Gimme my gun! (*Exit, hastily, door C. to L.*)

Stop music.

Enter NELL, door R.

NELL. (*Carrying workbag, her hands black*). Well, that was a job I don't want again in a hurry. Sure, I got me hands all black from the nasty stuff. (*Throws workbag on table.*) But there's one thing certain—that bag of burnt cork will cost Mr. Patsy Donoghue many a glass of ice-cream sotzy-wather!

Enter GEO., door L.

GEO. (*Aside*). My wife is in the garden with that ever-present dude, and of course I can't get a chance to speak to her, or I'll again be called down for "carrying on a flirtation" with my own wife. Oh, what a pleasure it would be to punch that dude's head! (*Sits in chair over radiator.*)

NELL. (*Aside*). He don't seem to be happy at the idea of bringing home a bride.

GEO. (*Strikes his foot against the radiator and jumps up*). Jerusalem crickets! A great idea! The radiator! Now, if I could only have a roaring hot fire built in the furnace and hold that measly cuss over that radiator and roast him. By gracious, I'll try it! (*Sees NELL.*) Nell, will you do me a favor?

NELL. Why, to be course I will.

GEO. I want you to go down cellar, without letting anybody see you, and start a roaring hot fire in the furnace!

NELL. Start a fire in the furnace? (*Aside.*) He's gone clean crazy! (*To GEO.*) Sure, it's a hot enough day already, sir.

GEO. Will you do it, or shall I go myself?

NELL. Sure, sir, it wouldn't be right.

GEO. (*Handing her coin*). Here's a dollar that says it is right.

NELL. (*Taking money*). Of course, if you says it's right, it must be so. I'll start the fire at once, sir. (*Going C.*)

GEO. Yes, and be sure you make it a mighty hot one! Hold on! Is there any pitch tar on the premises?

NELL. There's some in the stable. Sure, the masther used it to "cork" his boat.

GEO. All right. I'll find it. Now hurry up that fire! Use all the pine knots you can find, and mind you make it hot—make it as hot as—well, you know. (*Points downward.*)

NELL. Sure, sir, I know. (*Exit C. to R.*)

GEO. And now for the pitch tar! (*Exit, door C. to L.*)

Enter COR., door R.—

COR. I just saw a strange man in the garden. It must be Romeo! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! My poor little heart is in such a flutter! I'm sure my cheeks must be as pale as death. I'll have to put on a little more of the "French rougey." Where did I leave my powder rag? (*Finds workbag on table.*) Oh, here it is. (*Opens the bag.*) Why, my mirror is gone. Well, I'll have to do the best I can without it. I wouldn't have Romeo catch me using powder—not for the world! (*Takes powder rag and blacks her right cheek.*) I do hope I'll get it on even. (*Blacks her left cheek.*) Mercy, how nervous I am. (*Touches up her eyebrows, nose, etc. Replaces rag in bag.*) There, now, I'll just step out on the veranda and let Romeo see how anxiously I await him. (*Exit, door R.*)

Enter GEO., door C. from L.—

GEO. (*Carrying tar-bucket, goes L. and opens the radiator draft.*) She's built the fire all right, and a good hot one it is. I'll just cover the seat of this chair with tar, so that when he sits down, he'll stick fast. (*Business of applying tar to seat of the chair.*) Now I'll find that pie-faced dude, and fill him full of "war talk"—get him interested—sit him down in that chair, and roast him until he promises never to speak to my wife again. (*Finishes applying the tar, and places the chair over the radiator.*) There, now, we're all ready for business. Whole calves roasted on short notice. (*Exit, door L., carrying tar-bucket.*)

Enter RICH., door C. from L.—

RICH. At last, I am here alone! I must contrive to see Nellie. Perhaps a reconciliation between us might result in the reinstatement of her mental faculties. From the

sound of her voice, while singing, I should imagine she occupies a room in this direction. (*Goes to door, L.*)

. Enter NELL R., door L.

RICH. (*Nearly running into NELL R. Aside*). The other lunatic!

NELL R. (*Aside*). The crazy man! (*To RICH.*) For whom are you looking, sir?

RICH. For Miss Nellie.

NELL R. I am Miss Nellie.

RICH. You? (*Aside.*) There must be some mistake. (*To NELL R.*) Were you singing some fifteen minutes since?

NELL R. I was.

RICH. Well, then, as I have evidently mistaken you for someone else, I will ask your pardon and retire.

NELL R. (*Aside*). I must detain him until the guards arrive. (*To RICH.*) Sir, I trust that you will consider yourself quite at home. Stay and converse with me. You know an exchange of ideas is oftentimes a rest to the soul.

RICH. (*Aside*). Well spoken for an insane person, and since my fears are appeased concerning Nellie, I consider it my duty to at least afford this poor unfortunate the small pleasure she asks of a tete-a-tete. (*To NELL R.*) I shall be much pleased—

NELL R. (*Pointing to chair over radiator*). Pray be seated.

RICH. (*Sitting in the chair which GEO. has tarred for FERDY*). Thank you.

NELL R. Will you pardon me if I ask your vocation in life?

RICH. I am what is known as a gentleman farmer. (*Aside.*) It's a strange fact that although a woman may become insane and lose her senses, yet she never loses her curiosity.

NELL R. (*Smiling incredulously*). Is your place in this vicinity?

RICH. About five miles distant. (*Commences to feel the heat from the radiator, fans himself with his hat, sputters, mops his brow with his handkerchief, etc.*)

NELL R. You seem overheated. I shall request the servant to bring you a glass of water. (*Aside.*) I can send for the Captain at the same time.

RICH. No, no, I beg of you. (*Aside.*) These lunatics are tricky. She might poison the water, under the impression that she was ridding the earth of some noted tyrant. (*Feels the heat.*) Gracious! This is getting unbearable. (*Wrings out handkerchief. It exudes a stream of water. Mops his head, etc.*) I'll move nearer the door and get in the draft. (*Attempts to rise.*) Heavens! I'm stuck! (*Attempts to pull himself loose from the chair.*)

NELL R. (*Aside.*) He looks as if he was going to have a fit.

RICH. (*Aside.*) Now I'm in for it! Roasting alive in this overheated room, and stuck fast to this chair! (*Mops his brow, wrings out handkerchief, fans himself, attempts to get loose, etc.*)

NELL R. Would you prefer to go to the front veranda?

RICH. No, thank you. To tell you the truth, I am rather "stuck" on this place.

NELL R. (*Aside.*) The first slang I've heard him use. I suppose he's liable to swear a string of oaths in a minute.

RICH. (*Aside.*) I'd like to be where I could give full vent to my feelings. I'd swear until the blue smoke would ascend in clouds. (*Same business.*)

NELL R. (*Excitedly.*) Oh, please, sir!

RICH. (*Twisting about. Aside.*) Oh, why was I ever fool enough to think of visiting a Lunatic Asylum? If this keeps up, I'll soon be just as crazy as any of them! (*In trying to rise, he waves his arms, etc.*)

NELL R. (*Frightened, draws away cautiously.*)

RICH. (*Aside.*) She's preparing to have a fit. I suppose any minute she's liable to jump at me and tear my eyes out!

NELL R. Oh, sir, I must get you some water! I must! I must!

RICH. Yes! Yes! Get it quick! Get a barrellful! Call out the fire department! Turn the hose on me! Anything! Everything! Before I burn up alive!

NELL R. I will do as you say, sir. (*Carefully backs*

up stage, as if afraid to turn her back to him, and finally turns quickly and runs off door C. to L.)

RICH. Thank heaven, she's gone! Now, I'll try to reach the door and make a break for it! (*Rises, and walks up L., carrying chair, as if the seat of his trousers was still stuck to it.*)

Hurry music, P., till curtain down.

Enter COR., door R.

COR. Oh, Romeo, where art thou? (*Sees RICH.*) Oh, the crazy man! He's armed himself with a chair!

RICH. (*Sees COR.*). Another lunatic! (*He edges up stage, L., carrying chair. COR. edges down R. Then reverse, ad. lib., keeping the table between them, as if afraid of each other.*)

Enter FERDY, C. from L.

COR. (*Screams*). Oh, save me, Romeo!

FERDY. The lunatics! (*Dashes under the table, with his head out front.*)

RICH. (*Aside*). There'll be lunatics dropping from the ceiling next!

Enter NELL H., door L.

NELL H. (*Points her hand at COR., and laughs at her black face.*)

RICH. (*Perceiving NELL H.*). Heavens! It's Nellie, and she is insane!

NELL H. (*Sees RICH. Screams*). Oh! (*Exit, door L.*)

Enter CAPT. and NELL R., door C. from L.

RICH. (*Pushes NELL R. aside, tips over the CAPT., and rushes out, door C. to L. A puff of smoke comes up through radiator.*)

Enter NELL, door R.

NELL. Run for your lives! The house is on fire!

CAPT. (*Jumping up*). Here! You! Gimme my gun! (*Exit after RICH., door C. to L., followed by NELL R.*)

Enter GEO., door L.

GEO. (*Sees FERDY*). Here! I want to see you! (*Grabs FERDY by the ear and exit, door L. Quick action, general confusion.*)

QUICK CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*The same as Act II.*

Lively music till curtain up.

Enter CAPT., door C. from L.

CAPT. (*Head tied in a towel, limping as if generally broken up, carrying a long butcher knife*). I tried to capture that lunatic, and this is the result! And, worse yet, he has not yet been secured! I had every possible avenue of escape carefully guarded, but somehow he managed to elude us all, and I suppose he's concealed somewhere in the grounds, waiting his chance to break forth and massacre us all! (*Stabs at an imaginary foe.*) Merciful heaven! When I realize his desperate nature, and the fact that he still has my gun, it sends cold chills down my back! (*Runs his finger along the edge of the knife as if to test its sharpness.*) But I'm prepared for him this time! I hate to do damage to a crazy man, but when it becomes necessary to protect my life and property, I feel fully justified in resorting to violence! (*Stabs at an imaginary foe, and shudders.*) For some reason he seems to have an especial grudge against me and mine! That is evident from his attempt to burn the house over our heads. I must find George, and see if they've captured him yet. (*Lame business.*) Oh, my leg! Oh, my back! Oh, my head! (*Exit, door R.*)

Enter RICH., door C. from L.

RICH. (*His clothes torn, hat crushed, white cloth on seat of trousers to represent the seat gone, hair disheveled*)

and face marked. *Revolver in hand.*) And the keeper of the asylum told me that old man was perfectly harmless. (*Looks himself over sorrowfully.*) I must manage to see Nellie at any cost. Such scenes of violence as I have witnessed and endured (*looks himself over*) convince me that this is not a fit place to expect her to recover! In fact, the constant intercourse with such specimens of incurable insanity must of itself have the effect of prolonging her own misfortune!

NELL H. (*Outside L., sings the refrain of some popular song.*)

RICH. That voice! What a thrill it sends through me! I feel like a desperate man, capable of desperate deeds! (*NELL H. sings louder.*) She is coming this way! How fortunate!

R. N. H. *Enter NELL H., door L.*

NELL H. (*Has a kitchen apron tied around her neck, a wreath of flowers on her head, her hair down and hanging around her shoulders, and a dustpan in her hand. Business of moaning, waving her arms, etc., in imitation of an insane person.*)

RICH. (*Aside*). 'Tis she! Can it be possible that proud Nellie Huntington has become such a complete mental wreck? (*Places revolver in pocket.*)

NELL H. (*Going down L. Aside*). George told him that I had gone crazy. Poor fellow! He looks as if he'd had a hard time of it. Well, now I'll show him what a woman will do to gain the man she loves. (*Pretending not to see RICH., she places the dustpan on the stage, down C. Business of admiring it, kneeling and worshiping it, etc., then backs up stage, tragically, removes the wreath of flowers from her head, and places it on the dustpan. Same business of admiring, kneeling, worshiping, etc., then unties the apron from her neck, carries it out at arm's length to RICH. and ties it around his neck, choking him as she does so. Then tragically kneels, picks up the wreath, carries it up and places it on RICH.'s head, putting his hat on her head. Then same business with the dustpan, with which she hits him on the head. RICH. turns up stage to*

conceal his emotion, showing the seat of his trousers gone, and NELL H. turns down L. to conceal her mirth. During the above NELL H. continually moans, sings, etc., and RICH. shows his sympathy for her supposed affliction. She pretends not to recognize him throughout the entire scene.)

RICH. It is more than evident that I have been the cause of her misfortune! Worthless devil that I am! How can I ever expect her to forgive me? I can stand this suspense no longer! I must speak to her! (*Appealingly.*) Nellie!

NELL H. (*Tragically.*) What noise was that?

RICH. It is I, Richard!

NELL H. What ho! Have the roustabouts not yet put the coal in?

RICH. Don't you remember me? Richard? Your Richard?

NELL H. I did know a "Richard"—(*winks at audience*)—but that was long—long ago! Let me see—he was the family butcher!

RICH. * (*Disgusted.*) Butcher?

NELL H. No, no! He used to dig potatoes in my father's garden! (*Laughing hysterically.*) See! See! (*Pointing to gallery.*) He crowned my head with a wreath of chickens' teeth!

RICH. (*Aside.*) She raves, poor darling!

NELL H. (*Deliriously.*) We danced over the castle! We strolled through the clouds! We floated up the mountain! We climbed down the river! See! See! We are floating—floating over the moon! Richard and I! (*Works herself up into a frenzy, jumps up on the sofa, and makes a comedy-tragic swoon, falling in a heap on the sofa and laughing hysterically.*)

RICH. (*Aside.*) I must make her think we are in danger. The sudden excitement is liable to restore her! (*To NELL H.*) See! We are surrounded by enemies!

NELL H. (*Tragically arising, and falling into his arms.*) Oh! (*Shudders and nestles close to him.*)

RICH. (*Waving revolver.*) But see! We are well armed!

NELL H. (*Grabbing the dustpan.*) Yes, we are well armed! (*Waving the dustpan, she hits him on the head.*)

RICH. (*Excitedly*). We'll fight our way out if necessary!

NELL H. Yes, we'll fight! (*Throws out arms.*)

Enter CAPT., door R. →

CAPT. Well, what do you think of that? She's just as bad as her husband!

NELL H. (*Screams*). Oh! (*Exit, door L.*)

Mysterious music, pizzicato. →

RICH. (*Aside*). Confound this unhappy maniac!

CAPT. (*Recognizing RICH. Aside*). Why, it's the lunatic, and he's got a revolver!

RICH. (*Aside*). Now he's got a knife! It's strange they allow him such liberties!

CAPT. (*Running his finger over the edge of the knife. Aside*). I hate to do it, but he must be captured.

RICH. (*Aside*). I regret to do violence to an insane man, but I must protect my life!

CAPT. Maybe I can scare him! (*Prepares to lunge at RICH. with the knife. RICH. suddenly points the revolver at him. CAPT. frightened, turns his back.*) Oh, oh! Oh, oh!

RICH. (*Aiming revolver. Aside*). I may be able to intimidate him!

CAPT. (*Aside*). If I could only get one swipe at him! (*Comedy business of lunging at each other, ad. lib. Finally RICH. exit, hastily, door C. to L., followed by CAPT. As CAPT. reaches the door, COR. suddenly enters, C. from R., and CAPT. nearly cuts her down with the knife as he passes.*) →

COR. Oh, brother! Do you mean to murder me?

CAPT. It's all right! I'm chasing a regular moonbeam, and he mustn't escape! (*Exit door C. to L.*) →

Stop music.

COR. (*Going down C.*). Chasing a moonbeam! What can he mean? I do believe he's gone crazy! Gracious! My little heart is all in a flutter, and just as I was thinking of Romeo!

Enter FERDY, door C. from R.

FERDY. (*Goes to door L. and looks out, then to door R. and looks out, then looks under the table, under the sofa, behind chairs, etc.*). Awa, doncherknow, I cawn't seem to find Miss Nellie anywhere.

COR. (*Aside*). It's Romeo at last! (*Coughs to attract his attention.*) Ahem! Ahem!

FERDY. It's deuced stwange, doncherknow, Nellie hasn't called me Romeo, even once!

COR. (*Aside*). Why doesn't he look for me?

FERDY. (*Aside*). Perhaps she doesn't like to admit that she answered a newspaper advertisement.

COR. (*Aside*). He seems bashful.

FERDY (*Aside*). Awa, I'm glad I advertised for a wife; clevah idea, doncherknow!

COR. (*Coughs to attract his attention*). Ahem! Ahem!

FERDY. (*Aside*). Awa, here is one of the ladies. Perhaps she can tell me where to find Miss Nellie. (*Goes R.*)

COR. (*Aside*). He's coming at last!

FERDY. (*To COR.*) I say—beg your pardon, doncherknow—can you tell me where Miss Nellie is?

COR. (*Giggling*). I am Miss Nellie.

FERDY. You? (*Aside.*) What an idea! Why, she's a wegulah old maid.

COR. (*Aside*). He's so timid.

FERDY. (*Embarrassed*). Awa, you know, doncherknow—

COR. (*Coyly*). Sit down, and let us talk. (*Points to sofa. FERDY hesitates and she forces him to sit on sofa. She sits beside him, and he edges away from her.*) Don't be bashful. Come as close as you want to. (*Edges toward him.*)

FERDY. (*Aside*). Gwacious! What an idea! I weally believe she's poking fun at me. Deuced awkward, doncherknow!

COR. (*Business*). Ahem! Ahem! Do you like me as well as you thought you would?

FERDY. (*Embarrassed*). Awa—yes—more, you know. (*Aside.*) What a stupid question!

COR. Te-he! Te-he! You may kiss me if you want to.

FERDY. (*Disgusted*). Awa, by jove, doncherknow—

COR. Kiss me, Romeo!

FERDY. (*Aside*). Romeo! Nellie must have shown her my letter!

COR. Come, Romeo, dear! (*Grabs and embraces and kisses him. Comedy business.*)

FERDY. (*Struggling*). Oh! Awa—what do you mean, doncherknow?

COR. Tell me, dearie, shall we be married publicly or in private?

FERDY. Married? We're not going to be married at all!

COR. Oh, you can't mean to deceive me! You said we should be married immediately!

FERDY. Awa, by jove, what do you mean? I nevah said any such thing, nevah, nevah, you know, doncherknow!

COR. Oh, fie! Here are your letters! (*Takes letters from workbag.*) Forty-six of them! I know them all by heart! You promised to marry me in every one of them!

FERDY. (*Stunned. Aside*). My letters! This old woman! Deuced awkward, you know, doncherknow!

COR. Of course, you don't want me to sue you for breach of promise! So come along, Romeo dear (*takes his arm, and tries to drag him up C*), and we'll take a stroll in the garden. Come along, Romeo, Romeo dear!

FERDY. (*Business of drawing back, trying to escape from COR., etc., very miserable; kisses his hand and waves it at the audience*). Awa, good-bye, you know, doncherknow! (*Exeunt door C. to R., FERDY still struggling.*)

Enter NELL R., door L.

NELL R. I never saw such a place in my life! Everyone seems to have gone crazy! And George, my poor dear husband, is the worst of the lot! I declare! I don't feel perfectly sane myself! It's a perfect shame! George and I started in on our married life so happily, and now we're completely drowned in misery, just because he happens to have a rich uncle, and that uncle has an insane idea of expecting the whole world to be run according to his selfish ideas! For my part, I wish the uncle was in Ballyhack, and George and I back where we came from! It's been nothing

but trouble ever since we arrived, and I'm sure I can't stand it much longer! My nerves are completely broken down! (*Sobbing.*) Oh, why didn't we stay where we were and be happy? (*Drops her head on her arms on table.*)

Enter CAPT., door C. from L.

CAPT. (*Aside*). That lunatic will be hung for my murder yet! I declare I'm fast becoming a regular old hulk from all this trouble! I'm really beginning to wish I hadn't said a word about selecting a wife for George! Here he's only been married two days, and I not only catch him hugging the bridesmaid, but I find his wife in the arms of the lunatic! Talk about an old fool! I'm it! Anyhow, when I'm dead and in my grave, what will I care whether he's married to Tom, Dick or the devil? (*Sees NELL R.*) Well, little one, you don't seem to be very happy!

NELL R. No, I'm not! I'm perfectly wretched! (*Sobs.*)

CAPT. There now, don't cry. It's all right—he told me all about it. (*Referring to FERDY.*)

NELL R. (*Referring to GEO.*). He did?

CAPT. Sure! How could he help it? Didn't I encourage him? (*Aside.*) Who would have thought she'd fall in love with that pie-faced dude?

NELL R. (*Aside*). George must have confessed all. (*To CAPT.*) You—you are sure it's all right?

CAPT. Certainly. Didn't I tell him so less than a half-hour ago?

NELL R. Oh, I'm so glad!

CAPT. I suppose I ought to offer my congratulations.

NELL R. (*Rising*). Oh, you are so good, I could almost hug you for joy!

CAPT. (*Extending his arms*). Fire away! (*Noise of men shouting heard outside.*) Hush! I'll bet they've captured the lunatic! (*Going C.*) Cheer up, little one, the man you have accepted for a husband may be a trifle "light-headed," but his parents are extremely wealthy! Extremely wealthy! (*Exit hastily, door C. to L.*)

NELL R. His parents extremely wealthy? Why, what can he mean? George has repeatedly told me that he was an orphan!

ALL A MISTAKE

→ *N.R.*
Enter GEO., door R.

NELL R. Oh, George, I'm so happy!

GEO. I expected as much. (*Aside.*) She's glad to get rid of me!

NELL R. Why didn't you tell me you had confessed to your uncle?

GEO. Confessed? What?

NELL R. Why, about you and me.

GEO. I haven't told him a word about it! Do you think I haven't any shame at all?

NELL R. Why, George, what do you mean?

GEO. Oh, I don't know. Why don't you go and ask Romeo?

NELL R. Ask Romeo what?

GEO. Why, whatever you desire to know, of course.

NELL R. Will you please inform me who this Romeo is?

GEO. Do you mean to tell me that you don't know?

NELL R. Of course I don't know him. Who is he?

GEO. Oh, he's anybody—everybody.

NELL R. (*Looking at GEO. suspiciously.*) Well, where is he?

GEO. Oh, anywhere—everywhere!

NELL R. (*Aside.*) How his mind wanders. (*To GEO.*) George, are you aware that this Romeo business is liable to compel us to separate?

GEO. (*Bitterly.*) Certainly. Hasn't it done so already?

NELL R. George, if you were certain that thinking continually of Romeo was liable to affect the sanity of one of us, could you tell who he is?

GEO. (*Aside.*) Her love for that lop-eared dude has driven her insane! No, it hasn't! I see! She's trying to work that insanity dodge on me as an excuse for her actions, so that she can beg for forgiveness, but she won't get it!

NELL R. (*Provoked.*) George! I don't want any more nonsense! Who is Romeo?

GEO. Angry. (*Pulls out the letter he took from FERDY and hands it to NELL R.*) Can you deny the authorship of that letter?

NELL R. (*Takes the letter and reads.*) "My dear Romeo:

Meet me at once at Captain Skinner's, Oak Farm, Westchester. Ever your own dear Nellie." (To GEO.) What an absurd question! I never saw it before!

GEO. (*Who has been watching her intently*). Do you mean to tell me that isn't your signature?

NELL R. Of course it isn't! Are you such a goose as to believe there is only one "Nellie" in the world?

GEO. I never thought of that! Then you—you really do love me?

NELL R. Of course I do.

GEO. (*Extending his arms*). Here!

NELL R. (*Jumps into his arms. Comedy embrace.*)

Enter NELL, door C. from L.

NELL. (*Aside*). Well, what do you think of that? And his wife in the very next room?

NELL R. Why, George, I really believe you were jealous of me.

GEO. What, me? Not a bit!

NELL. (*Sneezes.*)

GEO. (*Aside to NELL R.*). There's Nell! She's liable to tell uncle! Hush! (*Aloud to NELL R., with mock politeness.*) Now if you will just step into the library. (*Takes NELL R's hand and leads her L., singing, "Hi-tiddly-hi-ti-hi-ti-I."* *Exeunt, door L., keeping time to the music.*)

NELL. Just my luck! I might a seen a regular circus, but of course I had to sneeze right at the wrong time an' spoil it all! (*Sneezes.*) Faith, there's nothing slow about Masther George. It don't seem to bother him, wife or no wife!

Enter RICH., door C. from L.

RICH. (*Aside*). There's no use trying to escape! They have guards at every possible way of exit.

NELL. (*Aside*). It's the lunatic!

RICH. (*Aside*). The next thing I know, they'll have me locked up with the rest of the lunatics!

NELL. (*Aside*). I wish I could get out of here! I'm scared of him.

RICH. (*Aside*). Well, what of it? It will place me near to Nellie!

NELL. (*Aside*). Oh, ho! I smells a rat. He's talking about "Nellie." He's no lunatic at all! He's Romeo!" (*To RICH.*) Did you come to find yer Nellie, sir?

RICH. I did. (*Aside*). I wonder how she knew?

NELL. Do you love her an awful lot?

RICH. More than life itself.

NELL. (*Aside*). What illegant talkin' he do speak!

RICH. And now, pray tell me, were you ever in love?

NELL. Oh, I'm in love now, sir!

RICH. (*Looking himself over sorrowfully*). It is very painful to be in love, isn't it?

NELL. Well, I should say so! I'm gettin' an awful pain! (*Aside.*) I wish I could t'row a fit, loike wan av thim society actresses! Faith, I'll try it. (*To RICH.*) Oh, sir, you're lookin' fer Miss "Nellie?" Sure, that's me! I'm so overcome wid emotion that I'm goin' ter faint!

RICH. Faint? Don't, I beg of you!

NELL. Sure, I'm too far gone to sthop it! (*Wink at audience.*) Catch me, Romeo, or I'll fall! (*Comedy faint, and falls in RICH.'s arms.*)

Enter CAPT., door C. from L.

CAPT. (*Aside*). The lunatic! Hugging another woman! He's a regular squeezer from Squeezerville. (*Rushes at RICH.*)

RICH. (*Aside*). The old lunatic again! (*Throws NELL in CAPT.'s arms and exit hastily, door C. to L.*)

CAPT. (*Catching NELL in his arms*). Why, it's Nell! Wake up! (*Shakes her.*) Wake up, I say!

Enter GEO., NELL R. and NELL H., door L.

CAPT. (*To NELL*). Here! Don't have a fit in my arms!

GEO. (*Pointing at CAPT.*). Talk about flirts, look there! (*GEO., NELL R. and NELL H. laugh at CAPT.*)

CAPT. (*To NELL*). What do you mean by falling into my arms? Get out of here! (*Pushes NELL away, and she exits hastily, (C.) to L.*)

GEO., NELL R. and NELL H. (*Laugh and make fingers at CAPT., and exeunt, door L.*)

CAPT. Oh, I shall go mad with all this! (*Going down R. Lame business.*) Oh, my leg! Oh, my back! Oh my head!

Enter RICH., door C. from L.

RICH. Sir, are you Captain Obadiah Skinner?

CAPT. I am—what is left of him.

RICH. Your hand, sir! (*Extending hand.*) I am Richard Hamilton of Pelham Manor!

CAPT. Richard Hamilton? (*Looks him over with derision.*) Oh, yes, of course, you are Richard Hamilton, all right! (*Does not shake hands.*)

RICH. My appearance undoubtedly surprises you. But if you desire proof, you can ask a young lady at present in this house, to whom I am engaged—I refer to Miss Nellie—

CAPT. (*Interrupting.*) Miss Nellie? Why, I understood she was engaged to a different person entirely. (*Aside.*) She must have given Ferdy the mitten. There's no accounting for the fickleness of a woman. I suppose I have been making another mistake.

Enter NELL R., door L.

CAPT. (*Aside to NELL R.*) Is that him?

NELL R. Him? Who?

CAPT. The fellow you are engaged to?

NELL R. Well, I should say not! I don't know him at all!

CAPT. (*Aside to NELL R.*) Just as I thought. He's a lunatic all right! Talk to him! Keep him here! I'll call the guards and capture him this time, all right! (*To RICH., in a derisive manner.*) Hush! Be quiet! (*Comedy bow.*) Excuse me a moment! (*Comedy bow.*) I will find Miss Nellie (*comedy bow*), and return in a jiffy. (*Comedy bow and exit, door C. to L.*)

RICH. (*Surprised. Follows CAPT. up C.*)

NELL R. (*Crosses to R.*)

Enter GEO. and NELL H., door L.

GEO. (*Aside to NELL H.*) Now's your chance! Faint! Faint!

NELL H. (*Pretending to faint, calls*). Richard! (RICH. runs down and catches her in his arms.)

GEO. (*To RICH., with bluff severity*). What does this mean?

RICH. (*To GEO., with emotion*). Oh, sir, this lady is my affianced! I am the guilty scoundrel who was the cause of her present misfortune, but heaven grant that she may yet fully recover her senses and forgive me for my past offence!

GEO. (*Aside*). I thought he'd work around all right!

NELL H. Richard!

RICH. What! You do remember me? Heaven be praised! (*Hugs her closely.*)

GEO. (*Aside*). Here's where we raise the mortgage on the farm! (*Jumps on chair and pats RICH. and NELL H. on their heads, with a mock blessing.*) Take her, my boy, she's yours. (*Jumps down, goes to NELL R., and hugs her.*) The cat's out of the bag, and we may as well stand by our colors, and trust to luck!

Enter CAPT., door C. from L.

CAPT. What's this I see?

Enter COR. and FERDY, arm in arm, C. from L.

CAPT. And you, too, Cornelia?

COR. Yes, I've captured him, and he loves me more than all the world. (*To FERDY.*) Don't you, Romeo?

FERDY. Yas, you know, doncherknow.

GEO. (*Presenting NELL R.*). Uncle Obadiah, permit me to present my wife.

NELL H. (*Presenting RICH.*). And permit me to present my intended husband.

CAPT. Why, George, what does this mean?

GEO. It means that your method of selecting a wife for me was

ALL. All a mistake.

Lively music.

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Danny Jim's hired help
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